

# Quotation Marks

✚ One of the two main uses for quotation marks is to indicate a person's exact spoken words (direct quotation).

Examples:

Katie said to her boyfriend, "My sister loved that movie."

"My sister loved that movie," Katie said to her boyfriend.

"My sister," Katie said to her boyfriend, "loved that movie."

"My sister loved that movie," Katie said to her boyfriend. "She saw it three times."



✚ Begin every direct quotation that marks the beginning of someone's sentence with a capital letter. Use a lowercase letter, however, for the second part of a quotation that divides a sentence.

Examples:

"Just put the CD next to the computer," said Lee. "We'll install the driver later tonight."

In this example, because the second part of the divided quotation is a complete sentence, a period and capital letter mark the movement from one sentence to the next.

"I became a paleontologist," Matthew explained, "because I am fascinated by dinosaurs."

In this example, commas after paleontologist and explained show that the dialogue tag interrupts Matthew's sentence. The word because has a lowercase letter because it is the second part of his sentence.

✚ An indirect quotation is the rewording of what someone has said. Never use quotation marks with indirect quotations. Often, but not all the time, an indirect quotation is announced by the word *that*.

Examples:

Direct quotation: Maria said to the group, "The meeting will begin at noon, sharp!"

Indirect quotation: Maria told the group that the meeting would begin promptly at noon.

Direct quotation: David told Mike, "Meet me at my car in five minutes."

Indirect quotation: David told Mike to meet him at the car in five minutes.

✚ Commas and periods always go inside quotation marks.

Examples:

Chris said, "I'm not going."

Chris said, "I'm not going," and then he added, "not today, not ever."

✚ Semicolons and colons always go outside quotation marks.

Examples:

David read his essay "I Sing a Song of Change"; then he answered questions.

Some women laughed at Karen's poem "Snake Oil": they didn't recognize themselves.

✚ Question marks and exclamation points go either inside or outside quotation marks, depending on the sentence. They go inside when the quotation itself is a question or an exclamation; otherwise they go outside the quotation marks.

Examples:

Inside: Kraig asked, "Is he just making a wild guess?"

Inside: Why do they keep asking "What's for dinner?"

Outside: Who just said "He's making a wild guess"?

A majority of the information presented in this handout has been adapted from  
[Writing Talk: Sentences and Paragraphs with Readings](#)  
by Anthony C. Winkler and Jo Ray McCuen-Metherell.

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✚ The first example demonstrates a question at the end of a statement. The second example shows a question within a question. The third example illustrates a quoted statement within a larger question.

## Examples:

Inside: Christopher read the sign aloud: “Danger! Explosives!”

Inside: Karen shouted at the wayward tutor, “Show up on time!”

Outside: Daniel screamed that we should kill all the “spiders and snakes”!

✚ The first example demonstrates a quoted exclamation at the end of a simple statement. The second shows an exclamation within an exclamation. The third illustrates a simple quoted phrase at the end of an exclamation.

## *British vs. American*

If you learned British English, you were taught an entirely different way of using quotation marks. In that case, you’ll have to learn and practice the American rules. You may also want to talk to your professor about the differences and ask for extra help.



✚ Aside from use to denote direct quotations, quotation marks are used to indicate the titles of other people’s short works, such as magazine articles and short stories. Underline or italicize the titles of other people’s long works.

Short Works	Long Works
Magazine article — “Easy Desserts”	Magazine — <u>Healthy Eating</u>
Newspaper article — “Hurry Up and Relax”	Newspaper — <u>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</u>
Song — “Summer Breeze”	Book — <u>David Copperfield</u>
Poem — “Mary Had a Little Lamb”	Poetry collection — <u>Leaves of Grass</u>
Book chapter — “The Darkness Appears”	Movie — <u>The Truman Show</u>
Editorial — “Education at the Crossroads”	Television Show — <u>60 Minutes</u>

## Quotations in a Nutshell

- ✚ Use quotation marks to indicate a person’s exact words.
- ✚ Begin every quotation with a capital letter if the quotation marks the beginning of a sentence.
- ✚ Do not use a capital letter for the second part of a quotation that divides a sentence.
- ✚ Do not use quotation marks around indirect quotations.
- ✚ Always put periods and commas inside quotation marks.
- ✚ Always put semicolons and colons outside quotation marks.
- ✚ Question marks and exclamation points go either inside or outside quotation marks, depending on the sentence.
- ✚ Use quotation marks to indicate the titles of short works. (Underline or italicize the titles of longer works.)
- ✚ Never use quotation marks around your own title.

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